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SCIENTIFIC NEWS.

— The Appalachian Mountain Club has issued its Register for 1883, containing its by-laws, list of members, etc. A fresh number of its journal, *Appalachia*, was issued in April. Among the leading articles are Professor E. C. Pickerings's on mountain observations, A. E. Scott's on the Twin Mountain range, and Mr. W. O. Crosby's on the mountains of Eastern Cuba, in which he claims that Cuba has, in Post-tertiary times, been an area of extensive elevation, the reefs fringing its mountains to a height of nearly 2000 feet affording indisputable evidence. But he questions whether these reefs were formed while the land was actually rising. The reefs in fact are witnesses both for elevation and subsidence, "testifying with nearly equal distinctness to both elevation and subsidence." The coast of Cuba is said not to be probably rising now, at least not at all points. Hence Mr. Crosby does not agree with Mr. A. Agassiz, who claims that the West Indian reefs, at least that of Alcaran, were formed during the elevation of the sea bottom, but accepts Darwin's theory as an adequate explanation of the elevated reefs of the Greater Antilles; and he claims that the upheaval of this portion of the earth's crust has been interrupted by periods of profound subsidence, during which the reefs were formed. "The subsidence of 2000 feet, of which El Yunqne is a monument, must have reduced the Greater Antilles to a few lines of small but high and rugged islands; and, as Mr. Bland has shown, fully accounts for the absence, in these immense tracts, of all large land animals, although they were abundant here in Pliocene and earlier times."

— An interesting lecture, by M. A. Milne-Edwards, on the deep-sea researches carried on during the recent cruises of *Le Travailleur*, appears in the *Annals de Chimie et de Physique.* Among other things, the author says, they often came across the substance, at one time thought so important, called Bathybius, and he verified the conclusion already come to, that it must be taken down from its high pedestal. Bathybius is merely a mass of slimy matter, which the sponges and many zoophytes yield when their tissues are crushed by too rough contact with the dredging apparatus. While animals are very numerous in the deepest regions, plants are wholly absent; those green, red and violet algæ, so common near coasts, would be unable to live in the darkness, and they disappear below about 250 meters (say 830 ft.). Whence do these deep-sea animals obtain their food? Plants alone can work up from the gases of the air and non-living substances, the organic matters which afterwards serve for food of plant eating animals, and, by their means, for that of flesh-eating species. "Therefore the food prepared at the surface, under the influence of the sun's rays, must gradually fall, like a kind of manna, into the submarine wastes where no plant can live."—*English Mechanic.*

— The question whether ostriches will breed in this State seems settled by what has occurred at Woodward's Gardens within the last few days. One of the female birds at that resort has commenced laying eggs and bids fair to continue in the work for some time. The first was laid on Tuesday and the second yesterday. One of them weighs three and a-half pounds, is four and a-half inches in lateral diameter and seven inches in longitudinal diameter. The ostrich lays every alternate day until she has ninety[1] eggs collected. Those at Woodward's Gardens are now on exhibition, as well as the baby camel, born on February 24th.

Those who have examined into ostrich farming are so confident of its success that a corporation has been formed for that purpose, with a capital stock of $30,000, all of it taken, called the California Ostrich Farming Company. A tract of 640 acres has also been secured on the old Abel Stearns ranch, near Anaheim, in Los Angeles county, which will be under the superintendence of Dr. C. J. Sketchley, formerly of Cape Town and an experienced ostrich farmer.—*San Francisco Chronicle, March 2, 1883.*

— In a recent lecture delivered at Leeds, says the English *Mechanic*, the Rev. W. H. Dallinger, F.R.S., spoke on the bearing of microscopical research on the origin of disease, and in the course of his remarks said the question might be asked, How was it when they were everywhere in contact with putrefactive germs, that they were not all diseased, and always diseased. The question was a pertinent one, and the answer, which had only been reached by modern inquiry, was a very definite one: that there was a total difference between what he might call the form of an organism and the function of an organism. He showed a group of putrefactive organisms, and said that if they took two of these organisms and looked at them, what would strike them was that the two forms were actually alike, but the one might be inserted into the blood of a human patient and be perfectly harmless; whereas the other, if inserted into the blood of a human patient, would cause death; so that the function was absolutely unlike.

— The Coast and Geodetic Survey steamer *Blake* returned to this port February 14, from a winter cruise for deep-sea exploration between the Bermudas and the Bahamas. On the 19th of January, in latitude 19° 41′ N., longitude 66° 24′ W., about 105 miles north-west of St. Thomas, there was found the greatest depth ever measured in the Atlantic, or 4561 fathoms. The place was about eighty miles south-west of the place where the *Challenger* made her deepest sounding, of 3862 fathoms. It was inside a basin—that is, many hundred fathoms down it was inclosed by a ridge. The temperature of the water at this great depth was 36 degrees. It is a curious fact in connection with such basins as this that the water of the bottom of them is of exactly the same temperature as that which runs over the top of the ridge several hundred fathoms above. The specimen of the bottom secured at this sounding showed a soft, brown ooze, with evidences of animal life.—*Scientific American.*

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[1] "Out of the four nests which I saw, three contained 22 eggs each, and the fourth 27." Darwin's Zoology of the Beagle. The number 90 must be an exaggeration.—Eds.

— The Division of Entomology, Department of Agriculture, has begun the publication of a Bulletin. No. 1 contains reports of experiments, chiefly with kerosene, upon the insects injuriously affecting the orange tree and the cotton plant, made under direction of the entomologist, Professor Riley. The second number includes the report by Mr. Lawrence Bruner, of his observations upon the distribution of the Rocky Mountain locust, in British North America, in 1882, in the region of Fort McLeod, and the Cypress hills and neighboring regions. Mr. S. A. Forbes contributes memoranda of experiments relating to the use of kerosene emulsions on chinch bugs. The correspondence contains items of considerable entomological interest.

— An interesting case of breeding is reported from Germany, viz., the fruitful pairing at Halle, of a Gayal bull from India with a cow of the long-horned African Zebu race, from the Soudan. The latter belongs to the oldest races of horned cattle, whose forms, as the figures on ancient Egyptian monuments witness, have remained the same for thousands of years. The result shows (as Herr Kühn points out) that such animals of primitive type, which have been so long subject to the same conditions of life, may, with suitable treatment, prove to be unweakened in their power of reproduction, even when placed in circumstances that differ in the most extreme ways from those of their home.

— A consignment of California quail has reached Inverary from America. They have been sent over by Lord Lorne in the hope that it may be possible to introduce the breed into the Highlands. They are at present housed in the Duke of Argyle's pheasantry, at Glengary, and are to be turned out in May. The Duke has recently imported a number of wild turkeys, which have been set free in the woods of Inverary, but it is too soon to be able to judge whether the experiment will be successful.

— Professor A. Hyatt announces that the Seaside Laboratory at Annisquam, Mass., will be open for the reception of students during the coming summer from July 1st to September 1st, 1883. The laboratory is carried on under the Boston Society of Natural History through the liberality and coöperation of the Woman's Education Association.

— Dr. E. R. Showwalter, of Mobile, Ala., has presented to the University of Alabama his valuable collection of fossils and marine and fresh water shells, embracing more than 100,000 specimens, together with a fine library of scientific works. It is said to take rank among the best collections in the United States.

— The King of Italy has conferred on Professor James Hall, of Albany, the decoration of commander of the order of St. Mauritius and St. Lazarus. He has also presented Dr. T. Sterry Hunt, of Boston, the decoration of officer of St. Mauritius and St. Lazarus.

— A despatch from Berlin says that William Charles Hartwig Peters, the German naturalist and traveler, is dead. Professor Peters was born in Coldenbüttel, Schleswig, April 22, 1815. He studied in Copenhagen and Berlin. He became known to the public by his exploration, from 1842 to 1847, under the auspices of the Prussian Government, of Mozambique, which he described in a work of four volumes, published between 1852 and 1868. From this work Bleek compiled his "Languages of Mozambique" (London, 1856). Professor Peters was connected for many years with the medical department of the University of Berlin, and in 1857 he succeeded Lichtenstein as Professor of Zoölogy and Director of the Zoölogical Collections. Professor Peters resembled an Englishman or Dane rather than a German. His temperament was rather sanguine, and his mental and physical movements more rapid than is usual with the Germans. He was an accute zoölogist and an untiring worker. His most important contributions are in the department of Vertebrata. He leaves a considerable family.

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PROCEEDINGS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.

National Academy of Sciences.—The annual stated session of the National Academy of Sciences was held in Washington, D. C., commencing Tuesday, April 17, 1883, at 11 A. M., at the National Museum. The following papers were read:

1. On the genesis of metalliferous veins, by Joseph LeConte; 2. On the composition of the venom of serpents, by S. Weir Mitchell and E. T. Reichert; 3. On the change in the properties of Atoms and Atomic groups caused by a change in the position of a molecule, by Ira Remsen; 4. On the nascent state of oxygen, by Ira Remsen; 5. On barometric gradients, by Elias Loomis; 6. On the structure of the skull in Hadrosauridæ, by E. D. Cope; 7. Determination of the inequalities of the moon's motion which are produced by the figure of the earth. A supplement to Delaunay's "Theorie du Mouvement de la Lune," by G. W. Hill; 8. Maxima and minima tide-predicting machine (exhibition of the machine), by W. Ferrel; 9. On the measurement of wave lengths of heat, by S. P. Langley; 10. The decay of rocks, geologically considered, by T. Sterry Hunt; 11. On the spectrum of an argand gas burner, by S. P. Langley; 12. Efficiency of storage batteries, by George F. Barker; 13. Photographs of the great comet of 1882, by C. H. F. Peters; 14. Progress in spectrum photography, by H. A. Rowland; 15. Some experiments upon a method of forming a visible image of the solar corona, by